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ABSTRACT

Classic theories in pedagogy such as those of John Dewey and Jean Piaget establish the foundation upon which preservice students in a social studies methods course build new knowledge about the teaching/learning paradigm. The constructivist philosophy emanating from these theories provides the rationale for a technique designed to enable students to acquire knowledge and master skills in instructional preparation and delivery. The technique represents an adaptation of contemporary theory in multiple intelligences designed to model the application of constructivism to students' development of a comprehensive understanding of B. Bloom's Taxonomy. In this methods class, students sing the blues as they learn how to formulate objectives. (Author/SM)

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HOWARD GARDNER, MEET BENJAMIN BLOOM: STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE ENLIVEN METHODS FROM THE PAST

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HOWARD GARDNER, MEET BENJAMIN BLOOM: STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE ENLIVEN METHODS FROM THE PAST

Abstract

Classic theories in pedagogy such as those of Dewey and Piaget establish the foundation upon which preservice students in a social studies methods course build new knowledge about the teaching/learning paradigm. The constructivist philosophy emanating from these theories provides the rationale for a technique designed to enable students to acquire knowledge and master skills in instructional preparation and delivery. The technique represents an adaptation of contemporary theory in multiple intelligence designed to model the application of constructivism to students' development of a comprehensive understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy. In this methods class, students sing the blues as they learn how to formulate objectives.

Introduction

What kinds of experiences provide opportunities for teachers-to-be to construct their knowledge about the concept, learning? How can teachers-to-be engage their diverse intelligences in order to facilitate the construction of that knowledge? Where does the ability to prepare instructional objectives fit into this new knowledge? I propose singing the blues, the hierarchy blues, that is.

Theoretical Rationale

I teach an introductory methods course in social studies education, and its content consists of many of the classic theories and concepts in pedagogy already familiar to professional educators. Students who are new to the discipline, however, find much of the course content to be alien to their own repositories of prior knowledge. Paramount among my goals, therefore, is to assist aspiring education majors to establish vivid schemes containing key elements of pedagogical theory. Hence, I rely on the constructivist notions of John Dewey (1938) and Jean Piaget

(1950) in order to inform my own teaching. The classics remind me how to formulate and provide appropriate learning experiences for my students.

I invoke the pedagogy of Dewey by engaging my students in experiential learning activities. When I structure classroom episodes within the context of the mind/body paradigm advanced by Dewey in Experience and Education (1938), I promote knowledge acquisition and skill development through auditory, kinesthetic, and visual modalities. I use this mind/body paradigm in order to enable students to establish new schemes associated with the teaching and learning process, schemes that students need in order to become successful preservice education majors. Consequently, a new scheme called learning is created. This is a scheme which, in Piagetian terms, is open to accommodate and assimilate previously unfamiliar knowledge and skills about teaching. They literally construct new knowledge by experiencing the classic theories (Hyerle 1996). Their experiences engage auditory, kinesthetic, and visual capabilities for the purpose of building this new scheme called learning (Brooks and Brooks 1993).

The acquisition of a comprehensive understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl 1956) highlights this construction project, because Bloom represents one of the classics in pedagogy contributing to the development of my students' new scheme. Yet as theoretical as Bloom's Taxonomy is, it needs to become an attribute of "learning." The hierarchy of learning enumerated in Bloom's Taxonomy is viewed as fundamental to the ability to articulate clear and accurate instructional objectives. Subsequently, students can build

knowledge and develop skills about the teaching and learning process which will span the range from theory to practice.

Theory to Practice

How to fit the domains of learning from Bloom's Taxonomy into a new scheme, then, demands the application of genuine, authentic experiences. Because I like to model contemporary practices when I teach, I approach my presentation of Bloom's Taxonomy by engaging students in a multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983) experience designed to encourage genuine learning. Gardner's theory emphasizes authenticity in scheme construction. It is a theory, when applied to practice, which promotes addressing an array of seven distinct intelligences. Therefore, by tapping students' intelligences in music, personal and social interaction, linguistic skills, individual movement, mathematics, and spatial relations, I facilitate the organization of a scheme called learning which is shaped around Bloom's Taxonomy.

So in preparation for my social studies methods class, I am constantly working on the development of processes such as the kind that demonstrate links between Gardner's theory and Bloom's Taxonomy. It occurred to me that I could exploit my interest in blues music to assist in making that connection between Gardner and Bloom. In fact, I decided to compose an original blues tune, a tune that I would use as the catalyst in the linking process. Its outcome becomes just what I sought: preservice social studies education majors will engage their varied intelligences in order to formulate instructional objectives according to the hierarchy of learning enumerated in Bloom's Taxonomy.

In a nutshell, we sing the blues: I distribute the lyrics of "Hierarchy

Blues" to my class, and I introduce the song, accompanied by my trusty harmonica (in the key of C), by exhorting students to sing (or moan, or cry out) along.

THE HIERARCHY BLUES

(chorus)

The hierarchy blues
The hierarchy blues
You know I got the hierarchy blues

The hierarchy blues
The hierarchy blues
You know I got the hierarchy blues

Bloom gives me a pain
In the cognitive domain
Don't forget the affective and psychomotor too

Bloom gives me a pain
In the cognitive domain
Don't forget the affective and psychomotor too

(cognitive domain refrain)

The cognitive has thinking skills
Six from low to high

Plan your lessons right

Your kids will reach the sky

(affective domain refrain)

The affective has attitudes

And it has values too

A low of one -- a high of five

Kids learn but don't feel blue

(psychomotor domain refrain)

Psychomotor it has seven

It gets real physi-cool

It shows how kids play out a task

To do their best in school

(chorus)

The hierarchy blues

The hierarchy blues

You know I got the hierarchy blues . . .

I sing the blues, play the harmonica, and direct my students to round out their understanding of the major concepts of the taxonomy by enumerating its specific levels of learning (an exercise in mathematical intelligence) while I am singing and playing the blues. Keeping to a blues beat, students count out each level (more mathematical intelligence) and visualize the hierarchical details of the taxonomy (an exercise in spatial intelligence) as they listen to each "domain refrain;" overhead transparencies illustrating the locations of the hierarchical specifics of each domain are projected to reinforce the visualizations. Then I have the class participate in a sing-along, and we all get into the "Hierarchy Blues." I intervene after each domain refrain by exclaiming, "Somebody scream!" which is the signal for students to call out the names of the levels of learning subsumed within each domain.

Learning Outcomes

By the time we complete our blues-fest, students new to social studies education have acquired a lasting impression of Bloom's Taxonomy. Indeed, students' in-class essays, mini-lessons, and field experience journal entries accurately reflect applications of Bloom's Taxonomy to hypothetical scenarios and to live classroom observations, respectively. They can eloquently write about the connections among the three domains of learning in synthesis essays. They can authentically demonstrate their theoretical understanding of the taxonomy in the presentation of mini-lessons. They can deftly relate specific levels of each domain of learning to classroom episodes observed during their social studies field experiences. Students

recognize how useful the taxonomy is in helping social studies teachers to design instructional units and prepare daily lessons that effectively deliver the content addressed by their schools' curricula.

Not only that, but teachers-to-be have experienced a constructivist approach to building knowledge about a new conceptual scheme, the concept of learning. They have done so by accessing a diverse array of intelligences. Singing the blues enables students to formulate their new conceptual scheme as it relates to Bloom's Taxonomy by participating in a fun and familiar medium, popular music. Gardner's notions of kinesthetic and spatial intelligences are engaged as well: Students are urged to boogie down with the blues, literally, to dance to the music (an exercise incorporating a combination of personal, social, and kinesthetic intelligences); next, at the expression of each domain refrain they run up to an overhead transparency screen, where they point to and shout out the appropriate taxonomic level projected from a transparency (both kinesthetic intelligence and linguistic intelligence); finally, they quickly return to their desks, where they plot the names of the taxonomic levels on their own taxonomy charts (these two tasks representing exercises in linguistic and spatial intelligence).

Acquisition of the concept is reinforced as the social interaction of a group sing encourages students to collaborate in outlining the structure of the taxonomy. And development of the conceptual scheme is enhanced linguistically when students visualize the lyrics of the "Hierarchy Blues," sing, and call out the details of the domains of the hierarchy as they appear on overhead transparencies. Never before have I seen my students so empowered by the blues.

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